

# NEWSLETTER

MUSWELLBROOK SHIRE LOCAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY INC (Founded 11<sup>th</sup> June 1958)

Affiliated with Royal Australian Historical Society

ABN 34611778680

PO Box 450 Muswellbrook NSW 2333

Editor Lionel Ahearn

No. 4 August 2024

44

## Elected Officials for 2024/2025

President	Lionel Ahearn	Vice President	Helen Ellis
Secretary	Heather Meissner	Treasurer	Rosemary Logue
Publicity Officers	Helen Ellis and Heather Meissner		
Research Committee Coordinator	Helen Milwain		
Assistant Researchers	Eve Ellis, Margaret Dolahenty, Ted George, Lionel Ahearn Rob Tickle on pre 1900 research		
Heritage Officer Coordinator	Heather Meissner with Rob Tickle as consultant		
Newsletter Editor	Lionel Ahearn		
Committee Members	Eve Ellis, Margaret Dolahenty, Ted George, Rosemary Logue		
Publication Consultant	Rob Tickle on books published by our Society		
Patrons	Local State M P Dave Layzell & Tony McTaggart		
Public Officer	Mal Rothe (Non elected position)		

## President's Comment Annual General Meeting 2024

It is with great sadness that we report the passing of one of our longest standing members Garry Meissner. Garry was already an active member long before I joined the Society in 2004. I quickly realised the depth of his knowledge about Muswellbrook as well as the surrounding district. At that time the Society records were kept in the upstairs rooms of Weidmann Cottage. This was a time before computers but he was able to put his hand on the correct book or material immediately without referring to any index.

Garry worked quietly behind the scenes carrying out so many roles that led to the Society running smoothly. Supplies were always on hand, the floors were clean, break in were attended to and the hundreds of little jobs that usually went unnoticed because they had been attended to and who could forget his sandwiches. He worked hard to keep the small museum operating even after we moved to our present building. Our deepest sympathy to Heather and their family. Garry, a Life Member of our Society, will be sadly missed and someone of his calibre and commitment will be impossible to replace.

## President's Report 2023 - 2024

The hard work has continued for another year by our hard working members. The Society records continue to grow and to be enhanced by those that meet every Saturday and Wednesday mornings. Our thanks to Eve Ellis, Lynda Neumann, Helen Milwain and Margaret Dolahenty for their constant efforts. Thanks also to those who continually provide records. Especial thanks to Helen Ellis who has continued to add to our Newspaper Cutting collection.

### DETAILS ABOUT THE SOCIETY

#### Objectives:

- To collect, preserve and promote the social, cultural and physical history of Muswellbrook Shire, its environs and its people for future generations.
- to promote public access to our collections and research facilities, and
- to provide information, advice and assistance to individuals, community groups, organizations and businesses.

#### Meetings

The Society meets on the third Saturday of each month starting at 12.00 in the Society Room at the rear of the Muswellbrook Library. All members and visitors are welcome to attend the meeting.

#### Premises

The Society maintains its records in a section of Muswellbrook Library. You will find us at the rear of the Library. The Research Centre is open every Saturday from 9.30am to 1.00pm. The Research Centre may be opened at other times by appointment. Bus & tour groups are most welcome.

#### Annual Fees

Single \$25 Double \$35 Pensioner Single \$15 Pensioner Double \$25

The Hon Secretary may be contacted via the post office box or email [mei2@bigpond.com](mailto:mei2@bigpond.com)

We have again launched some more books this year. On Saturday, 2 September we were delighted to have Kellie Scholes launch *Little Bits of History Volume 4* by Lionel Ahearn and *Gas Street Lamps* by Bill Spicer. Also who could forget Tony McTaggart's launch of two more books. On Saturday 4 May 2024 Tony and Brian Collard set up a slip rail fence together with some other memorabilia to highlight Bill Spicer's latest book *Muswellbrook Saleyards*. He also launched my latest collection *Little Bits of History Volume 5*.

Our executive continues to work tirelessly to keep the Society moving forward. Our Secretary Heather Meissner tirelessly follows up on all the paperwork, calls and correspondence that is necessary for the efficient running of the Society. Our main stay for so many years Garry Meissner had not been well for some time and sadly passed away not long before this meeting. We realise just how much he did. Thanks also to our Treasurer Rosemary Logue who has kept us in the black and fully up to date on all purchases and payments.

My special thanks goes to Bill Spicer and Rob Tickle for their help and advice in checking publications and providing research material. Also thanks to those that continue to supply information for Newsletters and publications. A quick check of the books contents pages will show you the large number who have contributed. My thanks to them all.

I have finally finished the second update of the Denman Cemetery Register. The original register and the two updates have now been combined into one book with the photos combined on one USB stick. I have begun work on the third update of Muswellbrook Cemetery and hope to have it released in the same format before the end of 2024.

Sadly on Wednesday 26 July 2023 the Hunter Valley News printed its final issue. Garry Meissner and I collected a ute load of printed and bound copies of the Muswellbrook Chronicle and the Hunter Valley News. These have been stored in the stack area which is climate controlled and should continue to be a valuable asset well into the future.

This financial year we haven't been able to arrange an outing for the Society. Many factors have worked against us but hopefully the next twelve months will again see us venture forth.

The Official Opening of the Denman and District Heritage Village on 24 November 2023 was an outstanding milestone for the district. The wonderful building and the collection of district items is outstanding. This sadly brings us to the need to decide what can be done with the Society's collection. When the Society moved from Weidmann Cottage to our present collection we were only given a few days to pack up the collection. Garry Meissner and I photographed, recorded and packed it into plastic boxes. These were stored in what we call the under croft area of the library (the foundations). It is difficult to get to and very restricted which makes for great difficulty in accessing the items. Displays have been arranged from time to time in the glass cabinets in the library. The future of the collection has been listed in the agenda for discussion in General Business of this Annual Meeting.

Another area of concern is the increasing age of active members. Like nearly all Societies and Clubs the attraction of younger members is almost impossible. With the increased use of computerised equipment we are desperately in need of members with the latest technical skills.

I look forward to another successful year of the Society and to all those who have contributed I say a big thank you on behalf of the whole Society.

Lionel Ahearn

President

---

### **Yvonne Eileen Rothe**

On behalf of the members of the Muswellbrook Shire Local and Family Historical Society we offer our deepest sympathy to Mal Rothe and his family and friends on the loss of Yvonne. Our thoughts are with you.



# Red Cross – Muswellbrook Branch

## 110 years of service

The Muswellbrook Branch of the Australian Red Cross Society, NSW Division, was formed on August 14<sup>th</sup> 1914 in the Muswellbrook School of Arts, at a meeting presided over by the Mayoress, Mrs D Fleming.

The following is an extract from the Muswellbrook Chronicle, of August 19<sup>th</sup> 1914, of the report on the meeting: - “A meeting of the women of the town and district was held, in the School of Arts, on Friday afternoon, August 14<sup>th</sup>, where there was a large attendance.

Muswellbrook School of Arts 1915 Society photo 2435.06

The Mayoress, who had convened the meeting, presided over the gathering. Mrs Tindale moved that a Branch of the Red Cross Movement, and 1<sup>st</sup> Aid Classes, be established in Muswellbrook. This was seconded by Mrs Humphries and carried. Drs May and Handcock addressed the meeting and promised to give their hearty support to the movement and to instruct classes when formed.

Office-bearers elected at the meeting were:

PRESIDENT Mrs W S Wilson      SECRETARY Mrs Tindale      TREASURER Miss Luke  
COMMITTEE Mesdames, Humphries, Garrett, Oliver, Clayton, Fleming, May, Handcock and Campbell.



Mrs W.S. Wilson (Jane) was president of the Muswellbrook Red Cross from its inception in 1914 until 1920. Jane Wilson was a daughter of the pioneering White family of “Edinglassie” and also “Belltrees”. She was born 6<sup>th</sup> January 1842 and at the age of 28 she married the Rev. William Skinner Wilson on 14.4.1869, at St. Albans Muswellbrook. Rev Wilson was the Rector of Merriwa and Cassilis and died in Merriwa on 13.3. 1883 aged 47. Jane lived to the great age of 92, dying on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1934. Until her death she continued to be a great community worker and devout supporter of St Albans Anglican Church.

It was decided that entrance fee for ladies would be 1/- (one shilling) if they desired to join the Branch and the first undertaking would be the supply of soldier’s bags for the troops. A number of ladies promised to supply same and the Secretary would be pleased to receive the names of other persons willing to supply bags or some of the articles arranged for each kit.

The same edition of the newspaper carried an advertisement detailing the items to be included in the made up soldier’s bags:-

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| • Two (2) coloured handkerchiefs, washed                                  | Two (2) suits strong pyjamas, thoroughly washed                  |
| • Two (2) pairs thick, large-sized socks                                  | One (1) reel black thread No 20                                  |
| • One (1) reel white thread No 20   | One (1) letter pad and envelopes, and two (2) black lead pencils |
| • Six (6) yards very thin flannelette to be thoroughly washed and pressed |  |
| • Six (6) yards very thin unbleached calico, washed and pressed           |  |
| • One (1) packet No 4 needles      Two (2) flannel shirts                 | Two (2) bandages, 2 inches wide                                  |
| • Two (2) bandages, 2 ½ inches wide                                       | (Signed – Claire E. Tindale. Hon Secretary)                      |

In 1918 and 1919 the Branch supplied the influenza hospital with food and clothing. 10 V.A.’s (Voluntary Aids) gave their services as cooks, launderers, etc, during the epidemic.

In 1920 the Muswellbrook Branch was disbanded and the surplus of £115/14/6 was sent to HQ for distribution among TB Homes.



The Muswellbrook Chronicle, of November 5<sup>th</sup> 1926, reported that, "There is an abiding regard for the Red Cross and its great work and was manifested on Wednesday evening, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, when a large number of town and district ladies gathered in the School of Arts for the purpose of listening to an address by Mrs. E MacKinnon, OBE. The object of the meeting was to reform the local Branch which had carried out splendid work during the war.

A committee was formed with Mrs H B Flanders (Mayoress) becoming President. Mrs Wilson would act as Patron. The Muswellbrook Branch worked tirelessly to support the many activities and each year they raised enough money to fulfil their financial quota to the Australian Red Cross.

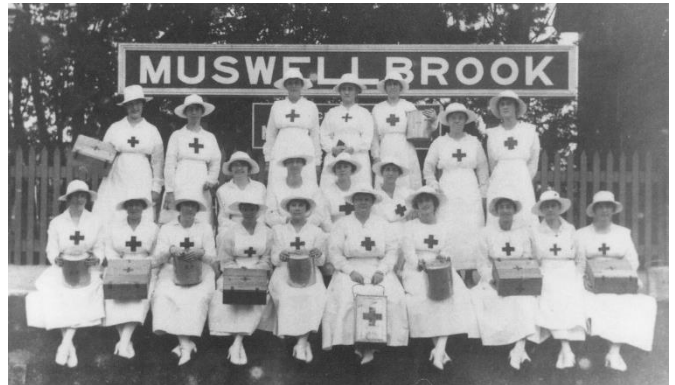
Below are some of the many activities the local members participated in over the following years.

During WWII the Train Roster members met trains at Muswellbrook Station to provide food and refreshments for injured soldiers and soldiers on leave travelling through Muswellbrook.

From the Muswellbrook Chronicle:

A report of a Red Cross meeting in October 1942 states 'Train Roster – All members on the Train Roster are asked to make up four bag lunches on 28<sup>th</sup> inst.

Muswellbrook Society photo 1186



The Red Cross ladies march in the 1940 Anzac Day service at the Muswellbrook War Memorial.

Still marching in 2014



Christmas Tree Competition which also included best wreath and best shop window display



2007 Talented Muswellbrook Embroiderers from left Lee Gant, Sheena Hooper and Pat Brown were equal winners of the best wreath award.

2017 Christmas Shop Window display won by Edward Higgens, Parkinson Real Estate. Tony McTaggart receives award from judge Glenda Murray



In August 2024 the members of the Muswellbrook Branch continue to meet.

The above is only a small part of the collection displayed in the glass cabinets in the Muswellbrook Library. The Branch also put together a book to celebrate the 110 years of service.

Above photos in Society Collection – Folder F207

